The Politicking of Space and a Local Museum.

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Abstract

Ethnic contests for spaces from pre-colonial South Africa, have taken on new forms in current literature. The politicking of space of the Kowie History Museum, highlights differences between interest groups and methods of contesting space. New political associations manifest themselves in post-1994, but still deeply-divided South African society. Negotiated, reconciliatory approaches to re-territorialize previously segregated spaces, stem from public deliberations for consensual outcomes. Politics of deliberate neglect result in neo-otherness as increased ANC-ification of society cultivates new perceptions and practices of space. Today, "here" and "there" have alternative meanings. Open protest and increased disillusionment with post-1994 democratic South Africa, renders Wilmot and Marais's arguments pronounced when contesting "the taking back of space." New debates surface, and relationships in the study area are changing. Inclusiveness and exclusiveness take on dynamic characteristics in the public sphere as new efforts to wrestle back communicative debate for the promotion of the sustainability of democratic (open) civil society surface. Such sustainability efforts take note of all communities and the allocation of scarce resources for all South Africans. Collective inclusiveness of memory commemoration, as the trading in the human past, and the representation thereof, promotes new politics and practices of reconciliation with an inclusive consciousness resonating a Habermasian public turn.

1. Introduction

The end of a phase in the history of the Kowie History Museum in Port Alfred[1] (South Africa) is near.[2] There are two possible reasons for a departure from an old to a new phase in the history of the Museum: firstly, as a result of the on-going problem of having to find new premises to house the current Museum because the building has been sold, and secondly, because of a recent call (by the

[1] Previously, I dealt with the background to this paper under the title "The Kowie History Museum and Historical Research." See <independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht>, 2013.

[2] I wish to thank the following: Mr H. Marais of *The Announcer,* and Mr J. Howzit of *Talk of the Town.* Both kindly drew my attention to relevant sources. In addition, Mr D. Schuurman, the current Curator of the Kowie History Museum, kindly made sources available. However, the views herein remain mine.

Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Museum, Mr H. Marais) for the Museum to become more representative of the diverse cultures of the Eastern Cape.[3]

These two challenges that the Museum face today, raise a range of epistemological questions about the socio-politics of space. They are dealt with as this discussion unfolds, but in essence, it is not wise to ignore the dilemmas we are confronted with if we were to overlook the "taken-for-grantedness"[4] and pre-conceived ideas so used to. Recent research compels cognisance of new understanding/s of concepts implicit in the above, for instance, the concepts of space and time. Both concepts, it seem, are not as categorical (or empirically demarcated) as one traditionally (or intuitively) believed them to be. Space, for instance, is not simply the physical locality of place, whilst periodization (time) has always been problematic for historians. The notion of periodization is important for this discussion (however not the focus) since nothing takes place outside space, or place, or the politics thereof. Another example is Z. Zhang who introduced concepts of lived space (being representational space), conceived space (being representations of space), and perceived space (being spatial patterns).[5] All three are considered relevant to the discussion below. The epistemological use of space in this article is broader than D. E. Davis and P. Raman's view of "mass of physical concentration of bodies in open and highly symbolic spatial locations"[6] such as parks, squares or plazas.

In line with the view that the Kowie History Museum is experiencing the end of an era, it can be conceded that the so-called end-of–history theories are nothing new. These theories are closely associated with controversies that surround the phenomenon of historical periodization.[7] Best known today, is probably Francis Fukuyama's book *End of History and the Last Man*[8] published two decades ago. Similarly, and about six years earlier, Jacques Barzun wrote in the opening lines of his *From Dawn to Decadence* "that in the West the culture of the last 500 years is ending."[9] The reality is that historians from as long ago, as written history has been practiced, have always argued about "ends in history."

The intention is to show how questions of space, place and time, influence the demeanours in which people experience and re-create the world they live in, or where they find themselves, and how this is applicable to the Museum. For instance, S. Elden argued that the struggle for space reshapes the global special economy.[10] The argument is that the current situation of the Museum should not only be seen in the context of local space as B. C. Wilmot argued. In all three instances implied above, humans establish unique relationships between space, place and time. Such relationships must not be seen, or expected to be static, but rather that they are in constant modes of change, adaptation or remoulding. Neither open-air space (e.g. a park) nor confined-air space (e.g. a museum) are contained in a literal sense by e.g. walls (of a building), or gates of e.g. a gated community, or fences around a park.

This study outlines how, roughly four decades ago, and long before Fukuyama and Barzun's

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[3] Houzet, J. "Kowie Museum Seeks to be More Representative", in http://peherald.com/blog/Talk-of-the Town/, 3 Aug. 2012.

[4] Alonso, A. M. "The Politics of Space, Time and Substance: State Formation, Nationalism, and Ethnicity", in *Annual Review of Anthropology,* No.23, 1994, p.379.

[5] Zhang, Z. "What is Lived Space?", in *Ephemera Reviews: Theory and Politics in Organization.* Vol.6, No.2, 2006, pp.220. www.ephemeraweb.org.

[6] Davis, D. E. and P. Raman. "The Physicality of Citizenship: The Built Environmental Foundations of Insurgent Urbanism in Cities around the Globe", in www.spaceandpolitics.org/category/featured-spi/, p.1.

[7] Carr, E. H. *What is History?*, pp.60-61.

[8] See Fukuyama, F. *The End of History and the Last Man.*

[9] Barzun, J. *From Dawn to Decadence. 1500 to the Present: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life*, p.ix.

[10] Elden, S. "The Politics of Space Because Space is Political. Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space", in *Radical Philosophy Review,* Vol.10, No.2, 2007, pp.101-116. <progressivegeographises.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/there_is_a_politics_of_space.pdf>.

respective popular publications, Wilmot (the then Director of the Albany Museum in Grahamstown, South Africa) argued in his address to the Lower Albany Historical Society's Annual General Meeting, his ideas about the possible establishment of a local museum in Port Alfred.[11] His intentions, Wilmot said, were to give a balanced personal view about such proposed project. At the outset of his address he made it clear that he wanted to be frank in his views. On the one hand, this frankness was expressed in the conviction that he regarded the establishing of a museum in Port Alfred as a "laudable one deserving of encouragement." But at the same time he would not spare his audience the "problems and pitfalls inherent in a project of this nature."[12] Wilmot's even-handed approach was underlined by the fact that he took note of the "Port Alfred side of the story" but that he also wanted to convey "other aspects of the matter''[13] that might not have been too familiar to the audience and other interested parties. In a nutshell, Wilmot wanted to present both sides of the story. As a result, and in accordance with the objectivity criteria for the historian, he wanted to "tell you what I know."[14] It is also clear that he had high regards for the facts of the matter.[15] It appears that he "did his homework" well because he consulted widely with different interested parties of the immediate society. It is against this background that the issues of space, place and time inherent thus far, will receive attention in the following discussion.

Whilst it is possible to agree with much of Wilmot's address, this article revisits some of the ideas that he presented in our attempt to determine if they are still relevant today. It is implied that Wilmot's arguments of some four decades ago, no longer hold. The suggestion is that intellectual moves towards the production of space, rather than the production of material "things,"[16] characterise the expansion of Wilmot's approach. In this regard, Zang described the question of "production" in the context of space, as follows: "space should be seen as the site of ongoing interactions of social relations rather than the mere result of such interactions."[17] In some form or another, the creation of space, is the focus of most interest groups – be it about the future of e.g. a museum, or the fiercely debated politics of land-reform in South Africa.

From the above it is clear that there was, and still is, some kind of resistance regarding both space and time associated with the future of the Museum – resistance that relates to the possibility of having to remain in the same building, and resistance regarding the current (continued) non-representativeness of the Museum. That is why it was previously stated that space and time both impact on the ways which Marais explained the current situation, as well as his observations regarding the need to transform the Museum. Undoubtedly, when analysed against the politics of space, then new relationships will be established in this future process between different interest groups.

2. Some of Wilmot's views in 1981 – and some of ours, today

Wilmot argued that the 25-30 years prior to his address[18] (roughly the period from the 1950s onwards), were characterized by marked changes about the thinking in (and about) museums.

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[11] Wilmot, B. C. "Some Thoughts on the Establishment of a Museum in Port Alfred", in *Toposcope,* Vol.xii, 1981, pp.3-8.
[12] *Ibid.,* p.3.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Ibid.,* p.8. See also Engelbrecht, C. "Limitations in History. Part I: Problems With Historical Facts", in *Toposcope*, Vol.xli, 2010, pp.40-52.
[16] Elden, S. *op. cit.*
[17] Zhang, Z. *op. cit.,* p.219.
[18] Wilmot, B. C. *op. cit.,* p.3.

These changes were brought about by technological advancements, professionalism and specialization, and as a result of new social needs[19] that stem from changing society and its perceptions of space. It is about the social wants that one can no longer concur with Wilmot's reference to "mainly urban communities."[20] The disagreement is formulated against the background of what P. Healey described as the considerable changes taking place in regional and urban governance that includes the re-scaling of governance arenas and associated networks that stems from territorial focus.[21] It is important to keep in mind that some 50% of the world population is now urbanized. In view of contemporary neo-social engineering of the South African society that also affects the Kowie region, the consequences of "left-over" rural space and diminishing urban space, impact on the life-world of those migrating. As a result, it follows that museums are not excluded from this new politics of space. This is of significance when we consideration is given to collective memory that moves into the public realm when it is changed into instruments of politics in order to build, insist on, and strengthen identities of different groups.[22]

Much of present-day political emphasis in South Africa is placed on the development of rural communities and the urban poor. During a recent television broadcast in September 2012, President Zuma made it clear that he will never be apologetic about government monies and efforts spent on rural community development. Today, various cultural and educational projects in rural areas are funded by state and private sector money in attempts to redress the imbalances of the part. In many present-day museums, new post-apartheid displays and collections for instance, confirm this tendency as matter of fact. As a result, whether museums "take displays to the rural communities" or "bring the rural communities to the museum," is hardly the issue – the point is rather one of much needed exposure by, and to, all population groups for non-direct political gain of a collective historical consciousness. In so doing, old, artificial obstacles relating to space are eradicated, but at the same time, new artificial obstacles are created. This greater exposure to society, does not have to be more to one community than to another – rather, it is about bringing up to speed that which has been neglected in the past (also under present-day ANC rule) in order to make history more representative of all communities. In other words, museology practices should be "to add on" or "build upon" instead of "chucking" out. It needs to be all-inclusive. Both philosophy and politics of space necessitate a responsible balance between museums and civic constituencies. Stated differently: equal histories needs to be practiced within the confines of the same politics of space.

The relevance of the politics of space in this context must be evaluated against the conceptual background of "real" and "imagined" spaces. Such evaluation includes consideration for the concept of *borders* or *frontiers* associated with space. In a sense, the question of visibility and invisibility of frontier space, have been addressed by South African historian, Martin Legassick, as far back as the late 1960s. Legassick defined a frontier "as a region where different cultural traditions come in contact and interact under conditions where no political community is able to establish and unchallenged legitimacy of authority."[23] It is clear from this definition that space does not have exact geographical confines demarcated by lines on a map or those following natural "boundaries" such as rivers. In the above, the literature time and again highlights the concept of a network of relationships and interactions between peoples of place. These relations are characterised by the inclusiveness

[19] *Ibid.,* pp.3-4.
[20] *Ibid.,* p.4.
[21] Healey, P. "Transforming Governance: Challenges of Institutional Adaptation and a New Politics of Space 1", in *European Planning Studies,* Vol.14, Issue 3, 2006. (Special Issue: New Urban Governance), p.299.
[22] Araujo, A. L. "Introduction", in Araujo, A. L. (ed.) *Politics of Memory. Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space,* p.1.
[23] Legassick, M. C. *The Politics of a South African Frontier. The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana, and the Missionaries, 1780-1840,* p.318.

and/or exclusiveness of Other. Inclusiveness and/or exclusiveness can lead to considerations of domination and the politics of occupation. Neo-Marxist interpretations of South African history, differs from this view since they argue in favour of a class basis of social relations.[24] Naturally, class struggle takes place in a spatial context[25] and not merely a geo-political place. This brings into question Lenin's well-known concept of socialism in one country.

South African cultures have always been separated and they contested space from the earliest days of this country's history. Consequently, the South African past and present cannot escape the politics of apartheid and realities of the geo-spatial separation of numerous cultures on the basis of allocated ethnic spaces in the form of homelands and their "place" in a still deeply divided society. The political philosophy at the time was one of perceived separate "development." With hindsight at our disposal, we know today, that at best, the failed homeland policies of separate development resulted in the development of underdevelopment of various spaces and the different peripheries.[26] Well-known South African historian, C. F. J. Muller asked decades ago, how was it possible for white people to have gained and resumed control over so many Blacks in South Africa and the African continent?[27] Recently, J. L. Hochschild asked the same question differently in the context of the politics of space: how do small entities get absorbed and how do large entities subdivide?[28] Again, South African homeland policies, present themselves as a relevant for this study. At first they regulated divided ethnic groups, and in post-1994 political life, new politics of space absorbed them gain in mainstream South Africa. Over time, the tensions between where people live (domestic space) and public space, spilled over to the workplace (work spaces) and into hierarchies of power associated with both. In the case of the Kowie History Museum, this is precisely what Marais meant when he argued for true representativeness of the Museum.

In this regard Judy Mohraz, president and CEO of the Piper Charitable Trust (of Phoenix, Arizona) said that supporting local community organisations helps them to expand their audiences. This resulted in improved financial stability. In turn, this brings more outreach to their constituent community. In this reciprocal relationship between the Phoenix Museum and Arizona's Hispanic population[29] both parties seem to have engaged on a win-win strategy. Mike Dodd made the same point in a case study relating to sports museums in Atlanta, Massachusetts and Kansas. He emphasized that museums are most often not destinations themselves, and thus rely on vibrant communities to pull visitors through its doors.[30] It is doubtful whether the proposed museum in Port Alfred then, and today, would have been, or is, in any different position. This situation resonates well with Bertam's view about the "commercialisation of [the] public sphere"[31] and also points at the seamless extensions of space into intra-spaces.

There is much ground to agree with Wilmot's view about the practice (or implementation) of the primary function of a museum, *viz.* "that of serving as an archive or storehouse"[32] and his views that "museums to-day are not just collections."[33] The issue here is the fine line between what historians do

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[24] See for instance, Wright, H. *The Burden of the Present. Liberal-radical Controversy over Southern African History.*

[25] Elden, S. *op. cit.*

[26] See for instance Frank , A. G. "The Development of Underdevelopment", in *Monthly Review,* Vol.18, No.4, 1966.

[27] Muller, C. F. J. "Introduction", in Muller, C. F. J. (ed.) *Five Hundred Years. A History of South Africa,* p.xii.

[28] Hochschild, J. L. "Searching for Politics of Space", in <scholar.harvand.edu/jlhochschild/publications/searching-politics-space>.

[29] Scott, E. "Museums Reach Out", in *USA Today,* 30 Jan. 2012.

[30] Dodd, M. "Coping Strategies for Sport Museums", in *USA Today,* 28 Nov. 2011.

[31] Bertam, I. "The Politics of Space", in <ibada.blogs.com/panchromatic/2006/10/the_politics_of.html>.

[32] Wilmot, B. C. *op. cit.* (Underlined emphasis in original.)

[33] *Ibid.*

and ought not to do. Harrison Wright's view is that "in their capacity as historians, they will serve that purpose best not by directly using their historical work to promote their particular social purposes."[34] However, if the period of the so-called Hundred Year War (1779-1878)[35] in the Eastern Cape of South Africa is considered, then the politics of space questions the traditional concepts of sequential spaces of local wars and conflicts. War and conflict were no longer states of exception. The warring processes destroy all borders and "fences." As a result, it wants to see that humans are spread out on the same plane and to give direction to human movement[36] - unless, of course, if this condition is seen in the following light: the nearer people are to and look at a war situation, for instance, the more they are inclined to think of it as a "normal" state – as a part of every-day life. On the other hand, the further people are from war, e.g. WWI, the more they are inclined to think of it as a state of exception, lasing only a few years.

About Wilmot's second function for museums, namely that of conducting and promoting research, we wish to add a few points. Research in this context, we propose, is of two types – formal and informal *internal* research, and formal and informal *external* research. Firstly, *formal internal* research is such that is usually carried out by employees of the museum. Such work generally pertains to specific research objectives. This might form part of an official plan or program of research. One could argue that it is of strategic nature for the institution. Of a second nature, is *informal internal* research that is conducted by a member (or members) of staff without it being part of their formal duties to do so, or, since at the time, they might not be involved with current formal internal research. Such research is sometimes conducted out of self-interest but the museum still benefits from the research results.

A second type of research is external research. *Formal external* research refers to e.g. commissioned research where the commissioning agent has formally asked and went into an agreement, with outsiders, to do certain required research. The commissioning party usually presented their research plan and fee structure for the project. The second type of external research is *informal external* research. Here outsiders conduct their own research and present the results to the museum which benefits from such informal external interest and or skills. These kinds of research reflect a symbiotic relationship between museum staff and the community – in both instances they benefit from the strengths and weaknesses of the other. Again, it is suggested that Wilmot was correct since technological advances, professionalism and specialization, and social needs necessitate such collaborative efforts.

Wilmot's view that "[t]hey [meaning museums] now can and must constitute in the community a vital element,"[37] needs to be expanded. Despite agreement with Wilmot that the educational aspect of museums is practiced differently today,[38] the "education for what?" remains the issue. There can be no doubt that in current South Africa educational objectives have a political intent – e.g. nation-building. Whether such is a primary or secondary objective, is a moot point, but the cross-cultural understanding and promotion of the multi-cultural historical past, still in a deeply divided contemporary reality, cannot be wished away. Cleary, the intent should be to benefit all South Africans and in time the memory of the apartheid past will wither away. Such attempts should focus on truth and reconciliation – and in both instances, museums have an important moral obligation. There is therefore, a fine line between nation-building and the increasing ANC-ification of post-

[34] Wright, H. *op. cit.,* pp.103-104.

[35] See for instance Welsch, F. *A History of South Africa,* pp.79-87; Peires, J. "An Early History of the Zuurveld", in *Toposcope,* Vol.xli, 2010, p.66.

[36] Virtanen, A. and J. Vähämäki. "The Structure of Change: An Introduction", in *Ephemera. Theory and Politics in Organization.* Vol.5 (x), 2005, pp.665. www.ephemeraweb.

[37] Wilmot, B. C. *op. cit.*

[38] *Ibid.*

apartheid South African society. The abolition of apartheid, the struggle against such before 1994, and post-1994 life, fits in well with the politics of space in terms of the occupation of public spaces.[39] The power influence of the ANC is now (mid-July 2013) sadly penetrating deep into the privacy of the Mandela family. Public opinion is divided on this issue as it relates to Madiba's period of extended critical illness.

In arguing this, one has, to a limited extent, attended to Wilmot's view of "where it [a museum] finds itself and on whom it serves."[40] Since all South Africans - urban or rural, should be involved and that the whole nation should benefit from museums, continued cultural elitism is in fact, ruled out. However, it does not deny the persistent practices thereof. For decades now, South African historiography constantly refers to the lack of black history – meaning history written by black historians.[41] And for decades now, and without fail, apartheid (read White people are) is blamed for the lack thereof. Such finger-pointing history is no history but merely the perpetuation of historical myth. The reality is tribalism in South Africa often complicates objectivity. Modern local museums can go a long way to contribute to address the shortcoming of a more representative history of South Africa without compromising their budgetary constraints or promoting novel forms of neo-domination.

The main point of disagreement with Wilmot is about the scope or "sphere of interest" of a local museum. This directly involves the politics and *politicking* of space. Naturally, local museums serve local interests, and of course, a local museum is smaller in physical size than a provincial or national museum. Wilmot was correct about the "planless" collection of material that could give rise to the establishment of countless museums. This does not however, equate to plan for *less*. Debate is with Wilmot's view that "[i]t is now widely agreed that it should not merely primarily concern itself with local affairs, but it should do so to the almost total exclusion of the wider world."[42] This disagreement stems from his notion of "widely agreed" – by whom, and how wide, is this agreement? Secondly, what does "almost total exclusion"[43] means? Is the exclusion "almost" or "total"? Wilmot's reference to the exclusion of the "wider world,"[44] is scrutinized for a few reasons. This view ties in well with careful reading of Gibbon's *Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire*, namely, that "[e]very national history, to be complete, must, in a certain sense, be the history of Europe; there is no knowing to how remote a quarter it may be necessary to trace our most domestic events; from a country, how apparently disconnected, may originate the impulse which gives its direction to the whole course of events."[45] Undeniably, the world has changed remarkably since Wilmot's presentation in the early 1980s – as did the conceptualizations of the role of museums.

Firstly, local events and history thereof can never be separated from the wider national and international community. The truism of "think global and act local," can be wished away, but is not a fruitful research strategy. It promotes cultural exclusivism and isolation. There is no doubt that historians place (or should place) their research topic/s in context. This historicity[46] is not only a minimum requirement of good historical practice, but rather a necessary condition thereof.

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[39] Dhaliwal, P. "Public Spaces and Resistance: The Politics of Space in The Indignados Movement", in *Interface,* Vol.4, No.1, May 2012, p.251.

[40] Wilmot, B. C. *op cit.,* p.5.

[41] Wright, H. *op. cit*., p.104. See also Saunders, C. *The Making of the South African Past. Major Historians on Race and Class,* pp.192-197; Smith, K. *The Changing Past. Trends in South African Historical Writing,* pp.155-221.

[42] Wilmot, B. C. *op. cit.*

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] See the Preface by the Editor of Gibbon, E. *The Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire.*

[46] See for instance Popper, K. *The Poverty of Historicism.*

Interestingly, the St Peter's Museum "present[s] a visual exploration of the former Soviet Union's *ideology*."[47] This indicates how the focus of museums has changed – they can now function as "living museums rather than a place of formal cultural venue." The reality is, and history has shown, that attempts to eradicate, or escape from a historical consciousness, somehow always fails. Historical research over an extended period, has also shown that history is *not* only "made," or written, by the "victors." The move towards the developing of the writing of "history from below" during the 1980s, underscores this. For instance, the application of oral tradition in historical method focussed on history from below.

Secondly, the South African colonial past forces cognisance of the imperial practices which European mother countries bestowed on their colonial peripheries in their perpetuation of colonial material self-interest.[48] Therefore, too localised perspectives tend to overlook "the rich history of the district"[49] and can be *a-priory* restrictive in its outcomes. One way of overcoming traditional interpretations is to include the concept of "contested spaces" as a proposed framework for historical analysis where social conflict prevail(-ed) in particular sites of the locality of competing cultures.[50] If one considers the historical reality that the South African past has been characterized *inter alia* by contested space from the first day of European/African contact, the science of space requires from us to consider the past and present in micro- and macro-level terms. The problems that the Kowie Historical Museum is confronted with are typically of micro-level considerations, whilst our history is replete with examples of macro-level conflict over space. Consequently, the deduction is that the politics of space is not a-political.[51]

The spirited rise of the globalization reality adds to the above. Wilmot is correct about technological advancement, professionalism and specialization about new thinking regarding museums, and it is mostly the instantaneousness of present-day communication through various forms of media that has shrunk the world to a mere local backyard.[52] This makes the linking of the local to the global immediate and a necessary requirement for improved understanding. It seems that they are the flipside of the same modern coin. The argument is that focused local research widens up perspectives to include global realities. For instance, technology is available to scan in at home, on a personal computer, a pottery artefact found on an isolated beach, and then almost immediately place such find in its international context. Such information can have far reaching impact on the researcher's interpretation/s of his local material.

Lastly, the recent rise of Global History as a distinct historical field of study, where focus starts with the widest reference point and narrowed down to the local, can find great benefit in local history museums' inspired research. This is producing new research results. Local history research results can be made globally available to a much wider audience than has been the case in the past. In a sense, the withering away of all constraints in society is the subject of the globalization of locally perceived spaces.

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[47] Washington, I. "Museums in St. Petersburg, Russia", in *USA Today,* 16 March 2010, in <http://traveltips.usatoday.com/museum-st-peters>. (Emphasis added).

[48] Engelbrecht, C. "Marx's Theory of Colonisation and Contemporary Eastern Cape (South Africa) Historiography", in <http://independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/Papers1755482>, pp.1-17.

[49] Wilmot, B. C. *op. cit.*

[50] Low, S. M. and D. Lawrence-Zúñigu. "Locality Culture", in Low, S. M. and D. Lawrence-Zúñigu (eds.) *The Anthropology of Space and Place. Locality Culture,* p.18.

[51] Lefebvre, H. "Reflections on the Politics of Space", in *Antipode,* Vol.8, Issue 2, May 1976, p.30.

[52] Engelbrecht, C. "Globalization Theory and Reference to Aspects of Eastern Cape (South Africa) History", in <http://africalit.nai.uu.se/exlibris/aleph/a18>, pp.1-10.

Unknowingly, Wilmot gave an answer to some of the above problems. He wrote that "[t]oo many of us think in clichés and we are content to accept other people's views and decisions."[53] This, together with his view that "museums to-day are not just collections"[54] and if considered against the aims and objectives of The Lower Albany Historical Society,[55] this paper makes for relevant historical research that is initiated by the Kowie History Museum. Against this background, Marais's call for greater representativety of the Kowie History museum is both justified and timely. However, Wilmot and Marais's different views are of pronounced importance – in a sense both reflect the concept of "critical special identities."[56] In this context, U. Best and A. Strüver's definition of critical spatial identities as "the outcome of an adherence to critical values connected with a localised culture, firmly linked with a place or locality,"[57] is appropriate.

The current debate about the Kowie History Museum is essentially one over contested spaces – defined as a "geographic location where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control of resources and access to power."[58] In other words, questions of space and place are at the centre of current most fiercely contested political issues[59] since "politics shapes the very homes, streets and cities in which we live, [thus] defining the spaces and places in which we are able to pursue our lives."[60]

3. Conclusion

The South African Museums Association defines museums as "dynamic and accountable public institutions which both shape and manifest the conciousness [*sic*], identities and understanding of communities and individuals in relation to their natural, historical and cultural environments, through collection, documentation, conservation, research and education programmes that are responsive to the needs of society."[61] It is for this and other reasons, that the continuing difficulties to define space, remain.[62] For instance, previous understanding that maps would suffice to assign territories and peoples thereto, no longer stand up against modern conceptions about space that regard "mapping as a particular cognitive mode of gaining control over the world."[63] The issue becomes more complicated when consideration is given to the concept of *imagined* space filled with ideology. Paradoxically, the ideologically imagined negotiated homeland policies of separate development

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[53] Wilmot, B. C. *op. cit.,* p.6. See also for instance Engelbrecht, C. "Limitations in History. Part II. Theory and Eastern Cape Historical Research", in <http://independent.academia.edu.christo>, pp.1-12.

[54] Wilmot, B. C. *op cit.,* p.4.

[55] See for instance the [Editor] "Constitution. Lower Albany Historical Society", in *Toposcope,* Vol. xv, 1984, pp.75-81; the [Editor.] "The Aims and Objectives of the Lower Albany Historical Society: A Reminder", in *Toposcope,* Vol.xxx, 1999, p.50; the [Editor.] "Extract from Lower Albany Historical Society Constitution (2002)", in *Toposcope,* Vol.xlii, 2012, p.76.

[56] Best, U. and A. Strüver. "The Politics of Space: Critical of Spatial identities and Critical Spatial Identities", in <econgeog.misc.hit=u.ac.jp/icgg/intl-mtgs/UBest.pdf>, p.1.

[57] *Ibid.*

[58] Low, S. M. and D. Lawrence-Zúñigu. *op. cit.,* p.18.

[59] Pappe, I. "Politics of Space." Keynote address at the CAPE Centre for Applied Philosophy, Politics and Ethics. (University of Brighton). 4th International interdisciplinary Conference, 16-18 September 2009. <megankime.blogspot.com/2009/02/politics-f-space-and-place-conference.html>.

[60] Clewer, C., N. Elsey and Certoná, C. "Introduction", in Certoná, C., N. Clewer and D. Elsey (eds.) *The Politics of Space and Place,* p.1.

[61] South African Museums Association. "Definition of a Museum", in <www.sama.za.net/index.php?option>.

[62] Massey, D. "Politics and Space/Time", in <knowledgepublic.pbworks.com/f/MasseySpace.pdf>, pp.65-84.

[63] Gordon A. and B. Klein (eds.) *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space.* www.cambridge.org.gb/knowledge/isben/item1168850/zsite.

meant nothing more than the hegemonic fragmentation of space which laid the foundations for later becoming spaces of protest. The geo-political *distance* of space is intersects with the politics of space.

Since intellectual landscapes are constantly changing,[64] the same is true of conceptions of the natural environment[65] that is closely related to space and time. If both are kept in mind, the current period of change for the Kowie History Museum refutes any false-consciousness regarding illusions of keeping the Museum exclusive or non-representative in future. Therefore, changing historical contexts significantly influence the politics of space.[66] For instance, the fact that the Kowie History Museum is not inclusive or representative of the Kowie society at large, have othered those excluded. This means that the formerly excluded, now becomes the newly politicised in society.[67] The same argument holds when the hypothesis that changing politics of space, changes interpretations of the past, is put forward.

The above approach blurs the traditional boundaries between geographic, temporal or disciplinary specializations and therefore links (local) people and (global) places. Instead, it connects the relationship between historical events and the wider world. In so doing, it broadens the "situational situation"[68] of local and global events and (hopefully) new perspectives thereof. Annual audits of yearly acquisitions and research projects will reflect the shift of focus in the process of renewal of the Museum. Likewise, the deaccessioning of artefacts is outlined in the guidelines of the South African Museums Association.

The new phase in the history of the Kowie History Museum is situated in a rapidly changing cultural environment brought about by global media and new technologies. Cultural studies are now needed to analyse the political economy of global culture industries, the proliferation of new media technologies and artefacts, and their appreciations by all audiences[69] - including the local. Museum management also needs to find a balance between the primacy of politics[70] and their own autonomous mission statements and values, or face consequences of being held responsible for promoting the interests of forces that could lead to new forms of barbarism.[71] In this respect, an awareness of Critical Theory[72] by museum management can assist to guard against regression because of its close association with the ideals of enlightenment.

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[64] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn and Decline. Notes 1926-1931 and 1950-1960,* p.25. See also Engelbrecht, C. "Early Critical Theory, Racket Theory, and the Arms Deal for South Africa", in <independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht>. 2013, pp.1-59.

[65] Engelbrecht, C. "Max Horkheimer and Environmental History. A Case for the Greater Kowie Region (Eastern Cape, South Africa)", in <independent.academia.edu/christoengelbrecht>, pp.1-15.

[66] Van der Veer, P. "Introduction: The Diasporic Imagination", in Van der Veer, P. (ed.) *Nature and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora,* p.1.

[67] Gibson, N. C. "Fanonion Practices and the Politics of Space in Postapartheid South Africa: The Challenges of the Shack Dwellers Movement." 2009. www.abahladi.org/node/5540.

[68] Horkheimer, M. "A New Concept of Ideology?", in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings.* (Translated by G. F. Hunter; M. S. Kramer, and J. Torpey. Introduction by G. F. Hunter), p.129.

[69] Keller, D. "The Frankfurt School and British Cultural Studies: The Missed Articulation", in McGuigen, J. (ed.) *Cultural Methodologies,* pp.12-41.

[70] Van Reijen, W. and J. Bransen. "The Disappearance of Class History in *Dialectic of Enlightenment."* A Commentary on the Textual Variants (1947 and 1944), in Horkheimer, M. and T. W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* pp.248-252.

[71] Horkheimer M. and T. W. Adorno. *op. cit.,* pp.xiv-xix.

[72] Horkheimer, M. *Critical Theory. Selected Essays.* See also Engelbrecht, C. "Traditional and Critical Theory – Any Relevance for Aspects of Eastern Cape (South Africa) History?", in <http://www.jakobsgaardstoltenresearch.dk/guest/laia.htm>, pp.1-14.

Finally, the meta-philosophical side to this debate[73] hinges on the critical juxtaposing of different ways of being "located" and self-consciousness. This debate also centres on the interest of organizing space in post-modernist and post-apartheid South Africa. The key concepts are for e.g. *de*-territorialisation, marginality, cultural difference and space. This critical interest questions traditional, seemingly unproblematic two-dimensional conceptions of space. It is naturally discontinuous and there are such givens as "settler" or "Xhosa" cultures or identities to consider.

Given the high level of contemporary societal migration, it questions the notions of multi-culturalism and/or subcultures.[74] In post-colonial and post-apartheid contexts, one can support the principle of a "new culture," challenging the traditional conceptions of the politics of space and the Other. The *re*-territorialisation of space in the historical process, questions old ideas of imagined cultures, attached to imagined places, with seemingly natural connections between peoples, their "cultures" and their spaces. The "illusion of a natural and essential connection between […] place and […] culture [is thus] broken."[75] Any museum claiming to be representative needs to take note of the globally interconnected world and thrive on the philosophy of *le différence* and politics of Other. It links modern social philosophy to history with a practical intent that aims at overthrowing the existing systems of institutions[76] by employing purposive-rational techniques[77] in order to eliminate suffering and the promoting of concrete human happiness.[78]

It can be concluded that a museum is no longer simply a place where local artefacts are collected and exhibited. The politics of space is not confined to public spaces such as parks, squares or open-air gatherings places. In the case of the Kowie History Museum, the associated imagined space conceptions, represent a combination between desire and faith – the desire to have a changed Museum and the faith in that such is the right thing to do – in both instances, the Museum is a site of conscience. For instance, how does one view Woodstock that took place on private farm land – did it became public space? When Nelson Mandela walked to freedom from Victor Verster Prison, did that signify a new direction in the politics of space? Such traditional practices can most certainly not stand independently from a wider life-world, nor can any form of cultural exclusiveness reign over demographic representativeness in South Africa today. Thus, there is a multiplicity of publics and spaces – their "borders" are permeable and seemingly uncontainable. Normatively speaking, institutions of memory studies can play a leading role in the understanding of the past, present and future since they influence and determine the spatial realities of democracy.[79] Transforming space is a means of transforming social relationships,[80] from e.g. museum-level to mega-level – or as Zhang made the distinction, between lived spaces, conceived spaces and perceived spaces.[81]

Through discussing the *status quo* of the Kowie History Museum, one arrived at a point where it is safe to state that the politics of space is a central concept in civil society. It does not only signify the network of institutions,[82] but includes movements (interest groups), associations (those for and against a new museum) and discourses (debate about representatives). For Habermas, the public sphere refers

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[73] I wish to thank Y. Kunvar (current MA student in Anthropology, Rhodes University) for bringing to my attention the work by Gupta, A. and J. Ferguson. "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference", in *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.7, No.1, 1992, pp.6-23. I have greatly benefitted from their paper.

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] Habermas, J. *Theory and Practice,* pp.1-2.

[77] *Ibid.,* p.254.

[78] *Ibid.*

[79] Bertam, I. *op. cit.*

[80] Dhaliwal, P. *op. cit.*

[81] Zhang, Z. *op. cit.,* p.220.

[82] Dean, J. "Civil Society: Beyond the Public Sphere", in Rasmussen, D. M. (ed.) *The Handbook of Critical Theory,* pp.220-223.

to a communicatively generated space,[83] and if Feinstein is correct that "within the culture of the African National Congress (ANC) it is implicitly accepted that one does not talk publicly about what happens inside the organisation,"[84] then much research is needed to understand how to reconcile these two realities against the background of the politics of contested space. The same is true if one considers, that if space is not communicatively arrived at, then how must forced removals from space during apartheid and currently under ANC governance, to new locations of space, be interpreted? Illegal shack dwellings raise similar concerns.

Ethnic space is essentially one of identity politics (whether inclusive or exclusive) – one that does not stand separate from the sovereignty of space and probably in opposition to the politics of consensus. The result is that *ideas* of space remain in flux as do the methodologies and politics thereof. This flux relates to decentralization of space, for instance, the provincializing of spaces into homelands and the eventual discontinuity thereof. On a smaller scale, the challenges and circumstances of the Kowie History Museum, served in our view, as an appropriate case study to highlight how the efforts to achieve social cohesion in a post-conflict society, are dialectically related to, and influenced by, the politics of space. In both instances, neither history, nor ideology related to the politics of space, has come to an end.[85]

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[83] *Ibid.,* p.223.
[84] Feinstein, A. *After the Party. A Personal and Political Journey Inside the ANC,* p.xi.
[85] Hopkins, A. G. "Introduction: Globalization – An Agenda for Historians", in Hopkins, A. G. (ed.) *Globalization in World History,* p.9.

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